

Other decisions contained in the Revised Forest Plan

1. I am identifying **lands administratively available for oil and gas leasing, and I consent to lease** (acquired lands) or have no objection to leasing (Public Domain lands) these lands for oil and gas development through the Bureau of Land Management (36 CFR 228.102(d, e)). These leasing decisions are found in Part 2 of the Revised Forest Plan. The availability decision includes 889,740 acres with standard stipulations, 755,979 acres with controlled surface use, and 66,875 acres with no surface occupancy stipulations. The consent/no objection decision is valid until the Forest Service provides the Bureau of Land Management written notification that consent is withdrawn or amended.

2. I am establishing the **R. R. Reynolds Research Natural Area** on the Crossett Experimental Forest. [36 CFR 219.25] The R.R. Reynolds Research Natural Area (RNA) is comprised of 80 acres of land in Ashley County, AR (administratively attached to the Jessierville Ranger District of the Ouachita National Forest), as described in the section of the Establishment Record entitled "Location" (the Establishment Record for this RNA is available from the Forest Supervisor, Ouachita National Forest, P.O. Box 1270, Hot Springs, AR 71902).

Rationale for the Decision

My decision to select Alternative E for implementation is based on a careful and reasoned comparison of the environmental consequences of and responses to significant issues for each alternative. I selected Alternative E because it represents the best mix and balance of management strategies that: 1) are responsive to the issues, concerns, and opportunities expressed by the public and other agencies; 2) establish ambitious but achievable objectives for ecosystem management, the transportation system, recreation opportunities, and relationships with local communities (including timber and scenery management, increased attention on the urban-wildland interface, and protection of public source waters); and 3) recognize the need to make relatively modest additions to existing wilderness areas while sustaining well distributed and abundant opportunities for semi-primitive and roaded-natural recreation experiences.

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative E will result in an intermediate level of forest management intensity, with somewhat increased prescribed burning and thinning compared to Alternatives A, B, and D, but considerably less than Alternative C. Alternative E offers the most attractive mix of improved ecosystem health, including habitat improvements for species of viability concern and reduction in forest health threats; diverse and high quality recreation opportunities; improved scenery management; and careful utilization of timber and mineral resources.

More specifically, I selected Alternative E over the other alternatives because it should:

- increase the acres in Fire Regime Condition Class 1 or 2 (the most desirable classes) more than any alternative except C
- reduce the acres in the high risk category for southern pine beetle outbreaks more than any other alternative
- reduce the acres at high risk for oak decline and other hardwood "health" problems more than any other alternative except C